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# MILCO Seeks to Rapidly Expand Enrollment

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As a former military officer, I personally value the importance of discovering new information that will help those who serve in our military. My job at the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC) in San Diego, Calif., allows me to be on the cutting-edge of research that will benefit those servicemembers.

As part of my job, I get to oversee many research studies, including the Millennium Cohort Study (MILCO) and the Millennium Cohort Family Study. In the MILCO study, we are combining survey data with personnel, deployment, vaccination, and

military health system information, to evaluate the impact of military service, including deployment, on various health measures.

A cohort study follows a distinct group of people over an extended period of time. In epidemiological research, only a cohort study has the strength to describe long-term health outcomes that are of concern to the military.

The MILCO study itself is a project recommended by the U.S. Congress in 1999, and sponsored by the DoD in response to concerns about the health effects of deployments following the 1991 Gulf War. The study is the largest prospective military health study in the U.S. and captures data from personnel across all branches of the military.

This year, we hope to expand our total number of participants by over 50,000. This will give us a chance to reach our goal of over 200,000 participants overall. I cannot emphasize enough how important this information is to understanding how multiple variables affect our service members or how much we need new volunteers to participate.

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Our enrollment cycles occur every three years and are timed so that we can assess the occupational exposure and health outcome that may be related to deployments. We're in our 10th year of the study and hope to continue until 2022.

In addition to the enrollment of service members, in this cycle we hope to enroll about 10,000 military spouses as part of the Millennium Cohort Family Study. The Family Study is designed to get a better sense of how military families are coping with military life after nearly a decade of war.

We will contact the enrolled spouses every three years to complete follow-up surveys, even if their sponsor is no longer in the service. We will use this study to help us understand the ever-evolving needs of our military families including the cumulative effects of multiple deployments.

More than 50 percent of our participants have been deployed in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their input will enable us to evaluate data from before, during, and long after their deployments. Some of the areas we are analyzing include post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, alcohol misuse, respiratory illnesses, and traumatic brain injury.

To reemphasize the great importance of this study, the MILCO is the largest ever long-term health study in U.S. military history – so I really hope you'll choose to be a part of it! It is my hope that every military service member and his/her spouse who receives an invitation will participate in MILCO and provide their invaluable input into this important study.

For more information on the MILCO, or to enroll in the study, please visit [www.millenniumcohort.org](http://www.millenniumcohort.org).

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